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Pulpit Preaching

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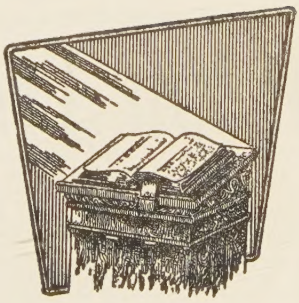

HOW TO LISTEN TO A SERMON

Gene E. Bartlett
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What a strange subject this is: How to listen to a sermon! If practice could do it, most of us would be experts by this time. Perhaps you have listened to so many that you feel about the preacher as the statistician felt about commencement speakers. He once figured that if all the commencement speakers in the country could be laid end to end—it would be a good thing! Moreover, listening is one of the biggest occupations in our generation. No one has done as much of it as we with the hours given to radio and television.

At least two considerations have led me to come to this matter. For one thing, preaching at its best is an act of faith on the part of the whole church. Just as the pastoral prayer rests upon our belief that God hears, so the sermon rests upon the belief that God speaks. Moreover, preaching cannot be complete until it is received in faith by those who hear. We count it of first importance that a man who is to preach prepare himself for his calling. But we often go year after year without preparing the worshipper to receive and take his part in this central act of faith. Preaching can never be fulfilled as long as the listener is only passive. He must be an active listener, a receiver of the word as well as a hearer.

This truth is clearly stated in words found in the Letter to the Hebrews. The writer affirms that a word has come in Christ which blesses and illumines our lives. He then recog-

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BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

The Human Problems of the Minister by Daniel D. Walker concerns the role of the minister in our generation. Writing with an engaging warmth of spirit and perceptive depth of understanding, the author considers the varied emphases of the pastor's relation to his church, his profession, his people and himself. Few books offer the minister such rich opportunities for self-examination. (Harper & Brothers, 203 pp., $3.95)

Three excellent volumes have been added to the Westminster Guides to the Bible series. **The Story of Israel** by Stephen Szikszai is a 95-page survey from Joshua to Alexander the Great that ought to be made available to lay leaders and interpreters. **The Threshold of Christianity** by Lawrence E. Toombs should claim the attention of both pastor and layman for its vivid and significant story of the 200 years between the testaments—a period obscured in much evangelical study—makes more meaningful both the old and new covenants. **Jesus and God's New People** by Howard Clark Kee gives a brief introduction to the four gospels and interprets Mark as the gospel of the Son of Man, Matthew as the gospel for the new people of God,

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Next month's themes will be "Emboldened by His Name" and "Communion Meditations." The October emphases will be "The Affirmations of Reformation Sunday" and "Lessons in Gratitude."

Pulpit Preaching

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A FAITH TO UNDERGIRD LIFE

OUR SURPRISING SELVES

Ralph W. Sockman, Christ Church, New York, N. Y.

What is the most interesting word in our language? What word above all others will make us sit up and take notice? It was the late Dale Carnegie, I believe, who said that to each person the most interesting word in the language is his own name.

Yes, we are all interested in ourselves. We have to be in order to live. When Jesus tok over from Leviticus the commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and placed it as one of the two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets, he did not change it to read, "You shall love your neighbor instead of yourself." No, our regard for ourselves is the yardstick by which we are to regulate our attitude toward others.

But with all our interest in ourselves, how well do we really know ourselves? The person who is always looking at himself and the fellow who is always "looking out for Number One," as we say, does not really find himself. One dangerous trend in current religion is that we are inclined to make it too self-centered. However piously we may talk about praying for others and however we may urge people to help others, so often the end result of it all is that it rebounds to our advantage and advances us socially and financially. The great Hebrew prophets and our Lord Jesus Christ taught that true religion is God-centered rather than man-centered. We must ever remember that God is our sovereign rather than our servant.

To be sure, we can study ourselves to see what makes us feel good. We can make ourselves comfortable and preserve a certain peace of mind by absenting ourselves from distressing situations and by thinking only of life's pleasant aspects. But if we turn away from the tough problems of actual living to seek our own mental contentment, we become like those "false prophets" whom Jesus condemned. He denounced as "false prophets" those in his day who, as he said, "Cry peace, peace, when there is no peace."

Christ came to give a different kind of peace. On the last night of his life when he knew that the cross was awaiting him on the morrow, he said to his disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." At that moment Christ was offering a peace far deeper than the comfortable thinking which we seek and call peace of mind. Christ was demonstrating what Saint Paul called "the peace of God which passes all understanding."

It would be presumptuous in me to attempt any adequate interpretation of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," for truly its secret eludes our complete explanation. But may I consider with you a prescription given by the Apostle Paul who found such peace not in the comfortable way we currently seek it but who found it in the midst of tribulation, persecution, peril, famine, and the sword. This is the formula Paul gave in his letter to the Philippians, the second chapter,

the twelfth verse: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

I

Note the first step: "Work out your own salvation." Paul was telling the members of the new church at Philippi that he could not be with them to lead them. They could no longer lean on him for support. They must learn to walk for themselves. Paul was doing for those young Christians what a mother does for an infant when she stands across the room and tries to encourage the crawling babe to rise up and toddle toward her. He was doing what a father does when he is teaching his boy to swim without his supporting arm.

A certain amount of self-reliance is essential to effective living. Emerson wrote that "self-trust is the first secret of success." Worthy self-reliance is a firm but modest dependence on one's own capabilities and efforts instead of a weak and unmanly leaning on outside assistance. If a person does not possess this trait of character, he will be the football of his fellows and the sport of circumstance. Self-reliance is a staff for the pilgrim and a tool for the worker.

And we surprise ourselves by what we can do through the sheer force of will. In my boyhood there was a very popular magazine entitled, "Success." It was filled with the stories of those who had overcome hardships and risen to fame and fortune. The general tenor of the magazine was that "where there's a will, there's a way." And it was fond of saying that the word "can't" is not in a real man's dictionary.

We can all cite case after case of persons who did the seemingly impossible. I think of an uncle of mine who about 1864 enlisted in the war between the North and the South as a lad of eighteen. He was so badly wounded that the army doctors sent him home telling him that he had only about six months to live. He gritted his teeth and said, "I'll show you." He lived almost sixty years longer. On the tombstone of a saintly old lady in Scotland is this epitaph, "She hath done what she couldn't."

And now we have learned about the surprising power of the subconscious mind, or the Unconscious. We have discovered that the hidden dynamo of the Unconscious can be made to work for us. We have found that our minds are most susceptible to heartening and energizing thoughts at certain times, as for example in the early morning. It has been said that the first twenty minutes determine the day. We now realize that our Unconscious can work wonders for us even while we sleep, for we have found that sleep not only "knits up the ravelled sleeve of care," but often unties the knotty problem which baffled our waking hours. We awake with the elusive answer in our grasp. And some geniuses even jump up from sleep and jot down their brilliant flashes of insight. Alas, I am not a genius and I have to stay awake to write my sermons!

With all this much-touted power of will and mind, it might seem that we could "work out our own salvation" by properly manipulating our own minds.

II

But Paul goes on: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." To understand these words we must consider the context. Paul is not urging them to try to save themselves out of fear of an angry God. This is not the craven fear of one who dreads a future punishment, but rather the sensitive carefulness of one who handles entrusted funds with more care than if they were his own. Hear what the Apostle is urging in this letter: "Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others."

Every person of honor has an honorable and justifiable fear when

he feels responsible for the interests of others. An able and experienced lawyer recently told me that when he represented a client in court, he always had a feeling of trepidation lest he might not fulfill his trust adequately. Dean Melby of New York University once said that a good teacher handles a pupil as if the child were an irreplaceable and invaluable object of art. And truly when we remember that each child is a unique gift of God and is possessed of an immortal soul, we should, as parents and teachers, handle the little ones entrusted to us with fear and trembling of spirit, lest we do something to let them down or lessen the richness of their eternal future.

When we are talking about fear, let us distinguish between the fear that stems from self-interest and the fear that is rooted in love. The Scripture says, "Perfect love casts out fear," that is, selfish fear. But love brings with it the fear of hurting others. Hence when Saint Paul reminds the early Christians at Philippi that they are responsible for the interests of others and for the furtherance of the gospel entrusted to them, he urges them, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

III

But the Apostle does not stop there. He goes on to add, "for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

Dr. Roy Smith tells of an attractive youth who came to the altar of a certain church and asked to be received into membership. He was a stranger to the pastor, but he gave sober and intelligent answers to the questions propounded. And when the minister announced that he was now a member of the church, the lad's face grew radiant. The following week a letter came to the church office from a distant port. It read in part: "Joining your church was my first step in a program of rehabilitation which I have laid out for myself. I am in the navy and I will have to go it alone much of the time, but I have started."

When I let my mind follow that young man, I see him alone in the night watches on his ship. And yet he will not be alone. He will feel that God is at work in him. I see the young fellow in distant places surrounded by the temptations which beset sailors in foreign ports. Yet he will feel, as the Bible says, that his body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and that God is at work in him.

When we feel that God is working in us, we have more than mere self-reliance. We have that which keeps our self-reliance humble enough to be really strong. When we are too successful, we tend to become self-reliant to the point of inflating our egos. My friend, Dr. Everett King of Albuquerque, tells of a large trailer truck which got stuck under the overhead girders as it was going through an underpass in Oklahoma. The top of the truck became wedged under the girder so that it could not move either forward or backward. The traffic was stalled. Cars were lined up for half a mile. Power trucks tried to push or pull it free. Finally a young boy who was standing by asked the simple question, "Why don't you let the air out of the tires of the trailer?" If you have difficulty in believing that the grown men would not first have thought of such a simple solution, I can only say that the story is told by a Presbyterian minister, and I have always been taught to believe Presbyterians tell the gospel truth! Anyway, the air was let out of the tires and the truck moved on.

Many of us get into a jam because pride inflates our egos and we need to be deflated. That is what God does. It is written, "God humbleth the proud." It is a curious fact that we overestimate our strength when we think about the temptations which we might face and underestimate our strength when we look ahead at possible troubles. If someone warns us

to stay away from some seductive situation, we say, "Oh, I would never yield to that temptation." Yet when the time comes, we do yield. But we contemplate some possible calamity and we say, "I could never stand that." Yet when we face the disaster, we do come through.

When we realize that God is at work in us we are kept from thinking too highly of ourselves and also too meanly of ourselves. How much criticism can we stand before we begin to lose faith in ourselves? Suppose that some bad rumor about you got abroad in your community, and this week every acquaintance you met turned his back on you. William James, the famous Harvard psychologist, asserted that to be "cut dead" by social disapproval can cause death. Perhaps that sounds a bit extreme. Maybe we would not actually die. But I have known people to lose their health of body and their healthiness of mind under the fire of criticism.

Think of Elijah after he had won his victory over the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. He learned that Queen Jezebel was after him to seek revenge. And Elijah fled to the wilderness. Then he hid himself in bitterness of spirit. He felt that everybody had turned against him. He cried: "O Lord, take away my life . . . The people of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thy altars, and slain Thy prophets, and I only am left." Then he heard the voice of the Lord bidding him go back and see how many faithful had not bowed the knee to Baal. Realizing that God was at work in him, Elijah was delivered from his despair and devastating self-pity.

And when we discover that God is at work in us to do His will, we come to see that some of the calamities whcih befall us work together for good. Recall the case of Joseph. Hated by his jealous brothers, sold into slavery in Egypt, tempted by the wife of an official in Pharaoh's court, subjected to almost every ill that can beset a person—Joseph held firm, believing that Jehovah was with him. And at last after he had given the grain to his false and famished brothers, he said: "As for you, you meant evil against me but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

When we hear Joseph say such words, we begin to understand what Saint Paul meant by his statement, "All things work together for good to them that love God," or as the Revised Version puts it, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him." Paul wrote those words out of deep experience. A biographer of the great apostle would say that the world did its worst to him: tribulation, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. But "In all these things," shouted Paul, "we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

When we feel God at work in us, both to will and to work for his good pleasure," we are in touch with him "Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." And we surprise ourselves. Thorvaldsen, the famous Danish sculptor, when asked what was his greatest work, replied, "The next one."

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF LIFE

J. R. Brokhoff, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Charlotte N. C.

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10

When an elderly person passes away, we console ourselves by saying, "After all, he lived a good long life." We equate the good life with the

long life. That is not necessarily true. It is not the extension of life but the intensity of life that counts. This is demonstrated by Biblical characters. Methusaleh lived for 969 years, the oldest man in the Bible. Yet, as far as we know, he accomplished absolutely nothing. In contrast we have the short span of 33 years Jesus lived. In that time he accomplished the redemption of the world. As Franklin once said, "Wish not so much to live long as to live well."

Because life is very short and comes to an unexpected end, every normal person is concerned about making the most out of the days God gives him on earth. Life is too short to be wasted. Each man wants to make the most out of each hour he is alive.

That is the way Jesus wants it, too. He explained why he came on earth. "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." He left the eternal throne in heaven to come on earth. This meant humiliation, suffering, and death. He endured all of these that men might have life. Not mere existence, not an earthly, animal life. He came to give us life that is beyond life—real, true, genuine living. It can be called the "abundant" life. He proved his intention by his ministry of service. A leper runs to him and says, "You can make me clean if you will." Jesus replies, "I will; be clean." Immediately there follows an account of a centurion who comes to Jesus with the problem of his servant at the point of death. Jesus at once answers, "I will come and heal him." Jesus does not want us to have ill-health or suffering or misfortune. He is anxious to remove any handicap that might deprive us of the fulness of life. Christ wants us to have health, strength, joy, and peace. He wants us to get the most out of life.

I

How then can a man get the most out of life? One way is to live fully. To live fully, make the most of your time. Time is life. To waste time is to waste life. It is tragic to hear people talk about "passing" or "killing" time. This causes life to be shortened. Many Americans are losing much of their lives by the poor use of their time. One survey reveals that the average American family spends five hours daily watching TV. Think of it! Five hours a day with eyes glued to a TV screen watching things that are not worth the time!

This is tragic when there is so much to do and so little time to do it. When an hour is misspent, it means that hour is gone forever. Waste an hour and you can say, "One golden hour gone with 60 diamond minutes." Stephen Vincent Benet put it:

> "Life is not lost by dying;
> Life is lost
> Minute by minute, day by dragging day,
> In all the thousand small uncaring ways."

There are people who make the most of their time. They get the most out of life by living to the full every minute. A retired Stanford professor, author of 40 books and countless articles, in one year of his retirement crisscrossed the country on translating assignments, set up Washington's first file of world languages, helped three friends to write books, and tackled five major translations. No idle moment in his life! Nor should there be in ours.

II

To live fully, make the most of your talents. God has given us talents, some more than others. To get the most out of life we must use them to the maximum. That is not what we are doing. Psychologists claim that we are using only ten percent of our natural capacities. Educators report that only half of the top three percent of our high school students go to college. Here is wasted talent, and with wasted talent goes a wasted life.

One of the tragic things in a school

is to see a student not making the most of his talents. He is just getting by and taking the line of least resistance. One young lad in high school has a fine mind and could do "A" work, but he hardly gets passing grades. He could be an athlete but he is too lazy to go out for practice. He could be the leader of his school, because he has a most attractive personality. Yet he is none of these, because he fools away his time. When it comes to getting in college, his grades are not high enough. He must go to a prep school for a year to get ready for college. He lost a year of his life.

Jesus taught that God will expect some day an accounting for the talents he gave us. Jesus taught that it is not enough to keep or save or hide a talent like burying it in the ground. Jesus said that God expects us to invest the talent that the returns may be double the original value of the talent. If we are 10 talent men and use only one, we are like a 10-cylinder motor working on one cylinder. To get the most out of life, we need to use all cylinders to get some where and make a contribution commensurate with our resources.

III

To live fully, we must make the most of our opportunities. These opportunities are to serve God and man. The more we take advantage of them the more we will be getting out of life. There is a fable about three horsemen riding across a desert. A voice told them one night to dismount and pick up as many pebbles as they could. They were told that in the morning they would be both glad and sorry. They did as they were told. The next morning they were both glad and sorry. They were glad they took as many pebbles as they did and were sorry they did not take more. The pebbles had turned into diamonds. Every opportunity when it comes may look like a pebble, but in due time it becomes a diamond of experience and satisfaction.

We live most when we give our lives to the opportunities God extends to us. Life was meant to be given to these opportunities of service. The famous violinist, Paganini, willed his violin to the city of Genoa with the stipulation that no man should ever play it. Wood when it is handled and used lasts a long time and suffers only natural wear. When wood is not used, like the violin in Genoa, it becomes worm-eaten. The violin of Paginini is only a relic today because it has deteriorated from non-use. A life that is conserved, saved, and preserved soon withers away.

Life was meant to be thrown away lavishly in the service of God and man. A colored maid once told her employer that a certain woman was "stravagant." The lady said she did not see how that was possible because she was living on social security. The colored woman replied, "I mean she is always doin' for others. She is stravagant with herself." We often hear people decry the fact that someone is burning a candle at both ends. Is that wrong if he wants to make the most out of life? Shall he let his life flicker like a little candle and see how long he can let it burn until one day the candle goes out? Is it not better to let the candle burn at both ends that it might give more light and cheer to all around it? It is better to live a short time and accomplish much than to live a long time and accomplish little.

IV

To get the most out of life, live fully. Live freely also. Many of us do not get the most out of life because we imprison ourselves in our own little prisons. Recently there was a news report of a Finn, Vaino Kilpinen, who as a young man entered his country's cavalry. He was thrown from a horse. He became deadly afraid of horses and deserted to his parents' farm. There he hid in the loft of a cattle shed. During the years his family brought him food and

clothing. As the years passed he watched through the cracks of the barn the men carrying his father and then his mother to the graveyard. Not long ago a governmental official discovered the deserter. He was told that he had hidden beyond the years the law demanded as punishment. For years he was hiding when he could have been free from the law. For 38 years the man was his own prisoner. He shut himself off from life.

In a similar way many people imprison themselves. They build a prison of rules and regulations. It is what is known as legalism. They put themselves on strict schedules that must be followed to the dotting of an "i". Their lives consist of "Don't"—Don't do this, or Don't go there. This robs life of freedom. It would be better to say with Augustine, "Love God with all your heart and do as you please."

We can imprison ourselves also by living within ourselves. It may be a world of illusion and make-believe. We never come to terms with life as it is. It may be a selfish world. We build walls around us and hide behind them. We are afraid of people. We are timid and we cannot get across to those around us. Now and then we get the courage to peep over the walls we have erected. One would like to smash down these walls and call to the person, "Come on out and live with the rest of us."

A negative attitude toward life can imprison the soul. There is a complaining spirit. This person is always looking for trouble and loves to stir up dissension. He is not satisfied unless he finds something wrong and then broadcasts it. A man was once studying the mosaic floor of the Capital's rotunda. At last he called to his friend, "I found it! I found it!" "What did you find?" "A mistake!" That is what many look and live for—mistakes, errors, troubles, in others. This negative, pessimistic view of life robs life of its excellence. Life is built upon that which is constructive and wholesome. To get the most out of life, all of us need to live and love and laugh.

V

Live fully. Live freely. To get the most out of life, live also faithfully in Christ. People who live in Christ say that real life is in this relationship with Christ. Paul thought he had the best life when he was a zealous opponent of the church. Later he explains that life for him really began with the experience he had with Christ when he was on the Damascus Road. In one of his letters he says that everything prior to Christ he now considers refuse or garbage in contrast to the excellency of knowing Jesus. When Eddie Cantor was in a hospital recovering from a heart attack, a woman recognized him and said to a friend, "There is Eddie Cantor. I thought he was dead." Cantor overheard the remark and replied, "Lady, I am not only dead but I have just begun to live." That is the way people who find Christ feel about life. With the advent of Christ in their lives, they just begin to live.

You may ask how this is possible. What does Christ do to your life and how does he give you real life? Christ gives us life when he offers us forgiveness for the past. Life now can be ruined by the past. In the years gone by, we may have committed errors, mistakes, and sins. These can inflict a person today. There may be an uneasy conscience or a sense of guilt. This is a heavy weight on the heart. There can be no inner peace. With no peace, there is fear, worry, restlessness, and nervousness. Christ offers to the humble and believing the entire forgiveness of every sin of the past. He came on earth to die for the sins of the world. His goodness and mercy give us the peace of pardon. He washes away every sin and makes us new again. When we receive this wonderful pardon, we are free from the past's mistakes. The guilt is gone. Peace has come. We are now ready to live today.

Having Christ means also strength for today. The past may be taken care of by forgiveness, but today remains with its problems and difficulties. There are things plaguing us. Each life has its share. We do not know the answer to them. They worry us and they make life miserable for us.

Here is where Christ come in. He promised that he would be with us always. Paul wrote that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him. Christ has the power of God to apply to our problems and needs. There is no problem he cannot solve. There is no question he cannot answer. By faith a Christian takes Christ into his life. Then he has strength from day to day to face and conquer his difficulties. This means that a man in Christ can live a radiant, victorious, triumphant life. Nothing can defeat him as long as he has Christ. And Christ will never forsake him. This is the life — in Christ! There is nothing that can compare with it. It is a triumphant life.

Christ gives, in addition, hope for the future. The years ahead may be fraught with misgivings. Sometimes we doubt whether there will be a world at all in the years to come. Because of present difficulties the future may look grim. We often ask, "What is going to happen to us?" Christ assures us of one thing. In the end the victory will be ours. If a man does what is right and lives by God's principles, no matter how much opposition he may now have or how dismal the future may appear, he will some day come out right in the end. He will succeed. His feet will stand on solid rock. We have Christ's own promise that life, love, goodness, and justice will in the end prevail. If that is so, we can hope for the future.

This hope for the future deals also with life after death. One thing we know is a fact. Every man shall die. We do not like to hear this. We avoid the subject like a plague. We dare not even mention the nasty word "death." It is all to no avail. Death is coming, sooner or later. Now what shall we do about it and how shall we face it? Without Christ, we have every right to shudder in horror at the prospect of death.

Christ frees us from death by the assurance of life eternal in him. He said that he was going to prepare a place for us. He died and rose again. This resurrection proves that his words about life after death are true. Jesus claimed that for Christians there is no death. "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." If we are in Christ faithfully to the very end, we shall be transferred to the kingdom of life and light. Heaven is where we enjoy and participate in the life of Christ in a fuller way than is now possible on earth. For one in Christ there is no death, only a fuller life after death. This takes away the horror of death. We can live to the fullest here and now without the dread of its end. There is hope for a better, even fuller, life ahead.

When we reach the end of life, how shall we feel about the span of life we just had? Shall it be one of regret for wasting life, for not taking advantage of every opportunity, for imprisoning ourselves and shutting ourselves off from life, and for living without Christ? If this be the case, then life was in vain. It can be otherwise. We can die without regrets of any kind. We made the most of life. We did our best, and no man is expected to do more than his best. We can die with a sense of satisfaction that while we were alive we lived to the very maximum. For life is not measured by years but by deeds, not by breaths but by thoughts. He lives most who thinks most, feels the noblest, and acts the best.

THE MEANING OF LIFE

Theodore P. Ferris, Trinity Church, Boston, Maassachusetts

What does your life mean? Does it mean anything? Are you getting anywhere, or are you just going around in circles? And if your life doesn't mean anything, or doesn't mean as much as you wish it did, why doesn't it?

We will begin with a rather cold-blooded statement of fact. Life doesn't mean much to a man unless he feels that he means something to life. Life meant a great deal to Thomas Carlyle in spite of the fact that he had many difficulties to overcome and terrible depressions to wade through. His bookplate gives away his secret. On the bookplate there is a drawing of a candle, burning, and underneath are the words, "I burn that I may be of use." He burned up his literary and emotional energies furiously, passionately, gladly, because he believed that they were of real use to the world. And life meant a great deal to him because he had the feeling that he meant a great deal to life. We can put this down as a fact drawn from our experience, that unless a man is of some use to the world, he doesn't have much use for the world.

I

There are, I think, more people in the world today than we like to think who feel that they are not of much use to anybody. They are going on, but they are not getting anywhere. They could drop out tomorrow and almost nobody would know the difference. You may be one of those people, for all I know. They look on the outside as though they were full of the purpose of existence but, when you look inside, you realize that they are just sticking it out and going on, enduring it, bearing it, because there is nothing else to do. They don't feel that they are much use to the world and, therefore, they haven't much use for the world.

One reason, it is said, why so many people feel that they mean little or nothing to life is that their work doesn't mean anything. Life means a great deal to a doctor because he means so much to his patients; he realizes that the patients need him, and that as he goes to answer their calls, he is answering one of the deepest needs of a human being; namely, the need for help in time of physical distress. This satisfies his natural craving to be of use in the world, and life means a great deal to him because his work means so much to him.

But what about the man who drives the shuttle train between Times Square and Grand Central? He never sees the light of day during his working hours, never has any other human beings to deal with—just the control that starts and stops his train. He doesn't go anywhere—just back and forth hour after hour all day. He doesn't even have the satisfaction of travelling the length of Manhattan—just three blocks under Forty-second Street, and back! What about that man? And when you stop to think of it, isn't it true that in the modern world, as it has been shaped by the Industrial Revolution, the number of motormen far exceeds the number of medicine men? In other words, there are far more people doing humdrum, monotonous, apparently meaningless jobs than there are men and women doing the jobs that one associates with the ministering professions. There are thousands of people in a city like this who are working in offices, or in factories, making a living, but not making any contribution that they can see to the lives of the people who are around them, and not making any real contribution to themselves, which is even worse.

Now, the conclusion that has been drawn from these facts is that men

get the sense that life has meaning from their work and, if their work has no meaning, then life will have no meaning. I was brought up on that proposition and, through the first quarter of this century, this was an important proclamation of the Church to the world. The Church woke up to the fact that it could not talk to people about the meaning of life until it did what it could to make their jobs mean something. And this was a real recognition, a great advance. It went hand in hand with that other proclamation that you can't ask a man to pray until you have given him a square meal. This was real advance and real insight into the meaning of human life.

And yet, as I think about it, I have questions about that conclusion, and my questions are based upon two very simple observations. One is this, that I know people in the ministering professions, doctors and nurses, ministers and teachers, people who have every opportunity to be of use to their fellow men, to whom life does not seem to mean very much. And I know other people who are doing dull, monotonous, humdrum jobs, to whom life seems to mean a great deal, and they transfigure their jobs by their own spirit. From these observations, I have drawn this conclusion: the meaning of life is not so much something that a man derives from his work, as it is something that he takes to his work. And then comes the question, If he doesn't get the sense that life has meaning from his work, where then does he get it?

II

In order to be concrete and avoid as far as we can the bogs of theory, I have taken two individuals, one a hypothetical person and the other a real person. I hope these two people will suggest the answer to the question, If not in his work, where then does a man find the meaning of his life?

The first person is an Italian gardener. He lived in the sixteenth century and was attached to a great landed estate. His fathers, for generations, worked on the same estate and his sons after him will be on the same land. He belongs to the famliy who own the land and, in a sense, they belong to him. He trims the hedges, clips the lawns, plants the beds year after year, after year. The pattern never changes. He trims the same hedges, clips the same lawns, plants the same flowers year in and year out. He has no chance of advancement, no prospect of change. Yet he sings while he works. He obviously enjoys life, and life has meaning for him. Where does he get it? From his job? From the hedges, and the lawns, and the gardens? I doubt it. I shouldn't be surprised if there were times when he hated the sight of them.

I suspect he gets it from the Mass. I suspect that when he goes to Mass on Sunday and sees the bread and wine lifted up before his eyes, and hears the words of the priest (or if he can't understand the words, sees the action) — this is done for you, God loves you, God came into the world for you and died for you—as this takes place, he is drawn up into the meaning of all life, and he goes back to his hedges, his lawns and his flowerbeds, not to derive meaning from them, but to take the meaning that he finds in God, that he could never explain, but which, nevertheless, gives him the sense that he counts because God knows him, loves him, and feeds him. He takes this back to his job; hence he can sing while he does it. That is the first person.

The second person is a real person. Some of you know him. He is a porter in the Grand Central Station. Like all the other porters, he spends all his working hours carrying people's luggage. It is not a particularly exciting thing to do, and most of the porters look as if they were doing it only because they had to. They make a living at it, and they go ahead day

after day carrying people's bags. Some of the people are pleasant, some are not, but they pay little attention to the people and not much more to their luggage. One of the porters is different. People look for him when they go to the station. They know his number and they ask for him. People from all over the world have asked for him. There have been articles written about him in all the popular magazines; books have been written about him. Why? Because one day, in Calvary Church, New York, he was converted to Christ. And when he went back to his job, he went back not only to carry bags but to carry the burdens of the people of the world and to carry into the lives of the people who were going back and forth on trains all over the country, whenever he could, the spirit of the living Christ. People were drawn to him. They went to him for help. This man found the meaning of life in Christ and he takes that meaning into his work.

Now here are two different ways in which two people found the meaning of life. Neither one found it in his work. One found it in a religious experience of worship, an experience which drew him into the meaning of life so that he knew that his life counted. The other one found it in adding to the work that he already did, a greater work, the work of Christ. I should like to speak in a little more detail about the second way of finding the meaning of life.

III

Suppose, for instance, you are a woman and your work at the present time is bringing up a family. You might say right away, Well, this in itself will fulfill all the instincts of any normal woman; I don't need to look for anything beyond this. Will it? In my experience, it will not. I have seen many a woman deliberately turn away from her family. Far from finding all her life fulfilled in her family, she found in the family a burden she could not carry. On the other hand, I have seen a mother who realized that above everything else she belonged to God, and that in some way unimaginable to herself, she had been chosen by the Creator of all life to be a channel for His life in the world, and that the children that she took care of, who sometimes could be so irascible and difficult, were gifts from Him, and that her job was not simply to bring them up in the world so that they could be healthy and able to make a living, but to bring them up in Christ, to do everything that she could to lift them to that higher level of life which emerged when, in Christ, God and man were at one. When this, you see, became her vocation, she brought something to the job of raising a family, which might indeed be very humdrum and monotonous at times, something that otherwise it would never have, and both transfigured the work and gave her a sense that she was being of supreme use to the world by being used by God to raise a family. Having a family does not necessarily give a woman the sense that her life has meaning, but a woman who finds the meaning of her life in something greater than her family can make the raising of a family pure joy and satisfaction.

Suppose you are a man in business. This is, perhaps, difficult for me to speak about, even more difficult than it was to speak about the woman, because I am not engaged in business the way many of you are; therefore, you may be predisposed to say, Whatever he says, don't take it too seriously because he is not up against the real problems of a businessman. But suppose you are an executive, a junior executive, and suppose you are in the railroad business. The railroads are having a hard time. Up against severe competition, they have been losing business and losing money, and as a businessman, and as an executive, your job is to see what can be done to put the railroads in the

black once again, to see what can be done to make them function efficiently and with profit. This is good so far as it goes. But may I venture to say that if this is all that you intend to do as a railroad executive, your deepest longings will never be fulfilled, and you will never have the sense that you are being of real use to the world.

I wonder if you would think that I had completely lost my mind if I said that you would not be doing your job, really, until you came to the point where you said to yourself, How can I bring Christ into the railroads? I wonder what would happen to American business if seriousminded Christian businessmen seriously, and without any sentimentality, asked that question every once in a while. How can I bring Christ and his spirit into my business? I know that you can't do it perfectly. I know that business has to make a profit, and I am not trying to claim that it shouldn't. But how can you bring into your business the idea that business is for the good of the public? The railroads, for example, are a public service, and whether they are making a large profit, or a small profit, or no profit at all, is beside the point until it has been determined whether or not they are fulfilling their function as a public service. To the degree of the courtesy with which the public is met, to the degree of the consideration in which the service is handled, and to the degree of the efficiency with which the service is managed, to that same degree can a man begin to bring Christ into this business of transportation.

Finally, suppose you are a person with nothing to do; there are many of you in this congregation. Either you have retired and have no real responsibility any more, at least as far as making a living is concerned, or you have enough money to live on anyway so that you don't need to go to work every day. Most of the time you enjoy life. You have worked out a program which fulfills a great many of your needs; you see your friends, you listen to music, you do the things that you like to do; your life is reasonably full, reasonably happy. But then — isn't this true? — there come times when you say, Well, what does it all add up to? I haven't the future to look forward to as I had when I was young. My children are all raised and settled. Here I am, just going around and around, filling up the time, living out the days, but I am not doing much, I am not getting anywhere, and I am not of any great use to anyone. That is the time for you to ask the question, How can I bring Christ into the little circle of my life? And the appalling thing to me is that so few people like us ever ask that question, and we are a little disturbed when other people ask it of us. We think that they are taking their religion much too seriously; perhaps, too sentimentally.

IV

If we could use the free time on the hands of the people in this congregation to spread, promote, and fertilize the Christian spirit of this community, think of the things we could do! I have in mind a procedure something like this. If you are in a position like this, without heavy responsibilities, and with a lot of time on your hands, begin by spending more time with Christ yourself. The Christ of the Gospels first; trace the image of the Ineffable One, then retrace it, fill in every line. Then the Christ of our community, the Christ of the moment, the spirit that is in you as the light is in this building. Then, think of other people in the light of him. When you are tempted to be impatient with or irritated by the people that you particularly like, try to think of Him, that He died for them as well as for you. Be courteous to them. Be kind. This is your vocation in life, to bring Christ into the little circle of your world, and you bring Him first by making Him a part of your life so that He radiates

from you, in tiny, unimportant ways, perhaps, it may seem to you; in courtesy, in good will, in cheer, so that the people around you feel brighter when you leave, not gloomier.

There isn't any life so dull or monotonous that it cannot be made more useful and fruitful when a man asks, How can I bring Christ into this? I wish you would try it when you go home. Think about your own work. I can't do it for you, because I don't know enough about it. You may think that this is in the realm of fantasy and imagination, but put it to yourself, What can I do to bring the Christ Spirit into my work? And I can promise you that if you do it, your work then will become something more than a way of earning a living; it will be a vocation that will knit you into the very fabric of existence.

You remember how Jesus, at the beginning of his career, saw two young men who were fishermen, and he said to them, "Drop your nets, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." I am not sure exactly how they worked that out, but I imagine that they continued to be fishermen most of their lives; that is the way they made their living. But that isn't where they found their real life. As they fished in the sea, they were looking for men and, as they tried to take a living home, they were trying to take the living Christ to every person they met. Remember this, and this is the last word: when a man's life work becomes Christ's work, life begins to have meaning for him.

MEN TO MATCH MY MOUNTAINS

Wesley P. Ford, Central Christian Church, Pasadena, California

Sam Walter Foss knew the beauty with which America was crowned, but he also sensed that beauty of land was not enough so he wrote in "The Coming American":

> Bring me men to match my mountains,
> Bring me men to match my plains,
> Men with empires in their purpose
> And new eras in their brains.

In this poem Irving Stone has found the title for his account of the western expansion of America. He writes of the period from 1840 to 1900. These few rousing decades gave the United States dimensions which its founders could not realize. This period of expansion is the story of excitement, adventure, bravery, and unspeakable hardship. It is difficult to realize that the trail to the west coast was cut so recently. As history records time, these exploits occurred only a moment ago. We who comfortably inhabit the west to bask in its sunshine, drink of its springs, and revel in its roses are only a moment behind those who walked where we ride, drove oxen where we drive cars, and scaled the mountains where we travel the highways.

The conquest of the west was a brief chapter in the expansion of men's horizons. Always new dimensions follow the pioneer spirit and the greatest adventures are not physical. The Hebrews' quest for the promised land was not unlike that of our western expansion. A different kind of struggle but just as heroic was that inspired by the prophets who called men to a higher level of life based on discoveries of the character of God. It is just as great an adventure to climb up the ladder in personal affairs from injustice to justice, from self-centeredness to compassion, as it is to travel from an Illinois farm to California.

One of the costly adventures in behalf of new horizons was that of the first centuries of Christian history. The Sutters and the Fremonts and the Bidwells wrote an exciting chapter in American life but neither the motive nor the daring matched the Peters, the Stephens, and the Pauls who pioneered with a new gospel. The city of God in which men shall dwell in peace was the quest of the early Christians. For mankind the goal is yet unreached. Men matched and conquered the Rockies and the Sierra Nevadas, but they have not yet won the battle over the primacy of economic gain, personal pride, self-centeredness, nor have we ended the search for security. To help us in our larger struggles we look to the heroes of the west and learn of them.

I

Always the pioneer is a person of vision. The poet spoke of the need for men with "new eras in their brains." New eras must be in someone's brain, in someone's heart and soul before they can be transplanted to land. Of those who came early to California the name of Charles Wilkes is remembered for publishing in 1844 the most dismal account of the new land. He was of Puritan background and wrote: "The state of society here is exceedingly loose . . . The country has by no means an inviting aspect." In contrast John Marsh wrote to friends in Missouri: "This is beyond all comparison the finest country and the finest climate. If we had 50 families from Missouri, we could do exactly as we pleased without any fear of being troubled."

One of the earliest settlers was John Sutter. He faced the wilderness, but writing to his wife in Switzerland he said, "Man can fashion this place into a paradise." The new era was already in one man's brain. The raw material for a paradise is here. The Kingdom is composed of people and people are here by the millions and are still coming. Our frustrations in the west are because of the crowds but so also are our opportunities. People are our business because they are God's concern! What do you see in California? Remember what an opportunity one man by the Jericho road presented! Must we overlook that opportunity because it is multiplied. The pioneer sees a paradise through the wilderness.

II

Another characteristic of the pioneer is the d e s i r e for adventure. Everyone must frequently ask himself, "How big is my world?" Some have refused to accept the border of desert or mountain. One westerner said, "I could not bring myself to lead the lazy carefree life so common of the general population." An historian has written of another, "He walked off the scene of New England and onto the pages of history." There are many motives that send men out of their little yards onto the pages of history, one of which is the desire to taste life to the full.

One of Sutter's biographers says of him: "He was one of those creatures that live for the sensation and tickle of being alive. In him the joy of life became contagious. In its best moments his personality was a marvel of nature, a lusty phenomenon like an enchanting cataract, a geyser or a magnificent thunderstorm." What a picture of life! Some have grown to such heights by conquering mountains; others, such as Peter, have become magnificent thunderstorms in the battle against sin.

But the day of adventure is not passed. For one who wants the sensation of life there are mountains. More exciting than discovering gold is the adventure of leading a person across the bridge from fear to faith, from doubt to conviction, from boredom to joy! One of the difficulties that the church faces now is the settled complacency of its members. We are too often unwilling to share the adventure of personal evangelism. The Book of Acts says, "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John,

they recognized that they had been with Jesus." Is there a boldness about us that betrays our Christian convictions?

III

With the urge for adventure the explorer combines c o u r a g e. The heroism and the hardship of early western caravans is seldom matched. We who travel super highways forget what it was like to come west when there were no roads, no maps, no account of the terrain or the availability of water or food. Oxen were killed for food, and wagons abandoned because they could not be taken up the mountains. But westward men came against the elements. Of one party the historian says, "They were lost in near delirium of staggering mountain canyons and peaks, trying to find their way down." But finally the party arrived, "starved, ragged, hollow-eyed but intact." Warned by the Indians that the rocks and the snow were impassable, men moved on, one foot at a time. Impassable and impossible were fighting words for men with the will to conquer. Through courage and ingenuity they matched the mountains!

But there are yet many mountains between us and the paradise we are meant to be. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Are we as willing to be hungry for the Kingdom's sake? Are we as willing to live dangerously in pursuit of God as some did in pursuit of gold?

While it was necessary for daring men to cut trails to the west it was not long until roads were marked and finally they were available for wagons. Then sizeable parties came. One such group which is best remembered because of its ill fortune is the Donner Party. This group whose journey was characterized by bickering made one fatal mistake. On the long journey they met a man named Hastings who told them of a shorter route by which they could save 400 miles. An experienced mountain man advised them to stay on the well established trail. But James Reed was convincing: "There is a nigher route, and it is no use to take so much of a roundabout course." A vote was taken and the men favored the short cut. The "nigher" route which was not marked led them into almost impassable mountains; it delayed them for weeks until they were finally trapped in the snow where many of them starved to death.

There are dependable instruments now for the traveler. And for those who would journey toward the City of Hope, toward the fulfillment of life's highest potential, the trail is marked by one who has gone before. Quality living which finds its fulfillment in joy and peace, and which becomes a benediction upon other lives always results from the discipline of the marked trail. But still we foolishly think there are less demanding ways.

During the wilderness journey, while Moses was on Mt. Sinai, men became restless and made their own god in the form of a golden calf. Now he could be carried along and they could hurry. But men must finally learn the truth of Mt. Sinai around which there is no short cut: "Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet. Thou shalt not kill." Still men get impatient but the detours always lead to tragedy!

Jesus deliberately set another mountain in men's path. Out of exeprience and a keen insight, He laid claim to the unwritten law which cannot be ignored: "Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . Blessed are the meek . . Blessed are the pure in heart . . . Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness . . . Blessed are the peacemakers." Much of this sounds impractical and wishy-washy in our so-called world of reality. But we may yet discover that Jesus knew the marked trail!

We who inherit the west are grateful for the daring pioneers who matched our mountains. We are inspired by their vision, their adventurous nature, their courage and we are grate-

ful for their marked trails. But our goal is not California; it is the Kingdom of God for mankind, and ahead of us are mountains steeper and more rugged than the Rockies. So our prayer is: "Bring me men to match my mountains."

LOVE IS SOMETHING YOU DO

Edward W. Stimson, Dundee Presbyterian Church, Omaha, Nebraska

Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." John 21:17

The greatest memorial address ever given includes a judgment of ethical realities which is often overlooked because of the great political purpose it commends. In the heart of his brief remarks at the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg Battlefield on November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln said: "But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

Lincoln was too modest. The world has remembered what he said there. His words were that important, while the two hour oration given by Edward Everett just previously has been completely forgotten. But Lincoln was essentially right. Deeds are more important than words, generally, especially deeds of self-sacrifice. President Lincoln gave classic definition to the motive behind the sacrifice of the men who fought and died at Gettysburg and turned the tide of the war. They gave their lives, he said, that a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal might live. And he called upon living Americans to dedicate themselves to the unfinished task, to "take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion . . . that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." His words were a call to living deeds. Love of this country, to him, was love for all humanity under God, and we must continue to live and act sacrificially until all men are free. This love is something we must do!

I

Abraham Lincoln had learned this ethical judgment from the Book he had studied by candlelight, and from the Master and Lord whose truths he had learned so well. Jesus so often had insisted that love must be expressed in deeds, not just in words:

"If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love . . . This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you."

According to Jesus, men will be judged at last by their deeds: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, for "inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

The climax of the Sermon on the Mount is the parable of the two builders: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock . . . and everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a

foolish man who built his house upon the sand."

And nowhere is the Master's insistence clearer than in his charge to Simon Peter, thrice repeated after the Resurrection. Peter had boasted that he loved Jesus more than the other disciples. "Even though they all fall away, I will not!" he had said, but before the cock crowed he had denied him three times! Then came the crucifixion, and the resurrection, and now they were beside the sea in the early morning in Galilee. Peter and the rest had gone fishing. Jesus called them to the shore, fed them breakfast, and then said to Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Three times He asked it, reminding him pointedly of the three times he had denied Him, and each time Peter protested his love. By the third time Peter was deeply grieved and repentant. And each time the Master's command was "Feed my sheep!" Show your love by doing the task I have left you. There were still lost sheep of the house of Israel, but now there would be the other sheep, not of this fold, the world around, who needed tending. Peter, Jesus predicted, would likewise give his life, in old age, in martyrdom. Love must be lived in deeds, not just expressed in words!

II

Strange that this should ever be mistaken! Yet in the very use of the Law of Love Jesus stressed, it has often been done. The strange omission that crept into that law pointed toward its misuse. The original form, from the great Jewish creed, the Shema in Deuteronomy and from Leviticus was "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In terms of ancient Hebrew psychology, the heart was the seat of the intellect and will, the soul was the seat of emotional vitality, and "might" meant strength in doing for physical activity. In Mark's gospel, we read that when Jesus quoted this as the first and greatest commandment He added a phrase, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength." This was not really in addition to the original, but in a world filled with the knowledge of Greek psychology, in New Testament times, Jesus added the word "mind" to make clear what the original involved. This was and is important. We should love God with all our intelligence!

But then note what happened. In Matthew's Gospel, in the same incident Jesus is quoted as saying, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind," and the original word for "might" or "strength" has been inadvertently omitted! I say inadvertently, for I think it was an unintentioned error at the first. But this is the form of the law of love that became most popular! This is the way people preferred to take it.

The three great perversions of Christianity which so early appeared all left out the requirement of practical deeds.

First there was Gnosticism, the first great heresy of the Church, in the second century. Intellectuals from the Greek world tried to claim Jesus' authority for their philosophical misconstruing of His teaching, making him out to be a teacher of salvation through knowing intellectual mysteries. Recently a Coptic scroll found in Egypt and purporting to the Gospel according to Thomas has been translated. It begins, "These are the secret words which the Living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas wrote." It includes such sayings as these:

"He said, 'Whoever finds the explanation of these words will not taste death." You see it was a secret knowledge and insight that would save!

Again, "Jesus said, 'Know what is in thy sight and what is hidden from thee will be revealed to thee" (5)

"Jesus said, 'The Pharisees and the Scribes have received the keys of Knowledge (Gnosis), they have hidden them. They did not enter and they did not let those who wished. But you become wise as serpents and innocent as doves.'" (39)

"Jesus said, 'Whoever knows the All but fails to know himself lacks everything'." (67)

"Jesus said, 'Wretched is the body which depends upon a body, and wretched is the soul which depends upon these two'." (This is Greek dualism, exalting the soul and mind, despising the body, and denying the real incarnation of Jesus in the body of flesh!) (87)

"Jesus said, 'Whoever drinks from my mouth shall become as I am and I myself will become he, and the hidden things shall be revealed to him." (108)

Such sayings are scattered among authentic sayings of Jesus. This is not true Christianity, but the Gnostic heresy which claimed Jesus' authority for its intellectual theories and esoteric philosophy. They claimed to love God with all their mind and to follow Jesus, but they wormed out of obeying God with all their strength, omitting the Cross!

Ever since, repeatedly, there has been this tendency. To this day, philosophical and psychological substitutes for the way of the cross claim the name of Christian.

The second perversion was monasticism: the concentration of the monks upon the contemplation of the beatific vision, withdrawn from actual life in the world, forsaking deeds of love for a mental substitute, living in caves in the desert, upon pillars and posts, or silent within monastery walls. Such sought to love God with heart, soul and mind, but used no strength to really serve humanity!

The third and worst perversion was the substitution of theological orthodoxy for moral conversion. It came about in the fourth century when Constantine was allowed to attend the Council of Nicaea and influence its deliberations that defined the person of Christ in theological terms. Although he had not yet been baptized and preferred to postpone that rite until he had committed some more murders he had in mind, he was welcomed as a Bishop of Bishops because he had given imperial favor to the Christian Church. Ever since then, in extreme Roman Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy, the love of God with the theological mind has largely taken precedence over loving Him with all strength through deeds of loving kindness to others and willingness to sacrifice for human betterment. The sin of extreme orthodoxy has ever been its unloving disposition. So many have forgotten Jesus' words, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" They substitute theology for ethics.

Yet we must recognize a similar failing on the part of sentimental idealists. They stress Christian ethical ideals, but cherish them only as lovely ideals, like the Czarist Russian woman who wept copious tears of loving sympathy over the suffering of the poor in a sentimental play while her coachman was required to sit in the freezing cold, frostbitten as he waited for her outside; or the captain of the slave ship with Negro slaves for America in the hold, who wrote a hymn about Christian love in his cabin. Even now there are people who claim to believe in the law of love and oppose integration and other forms of equal opportunity for Negroes, or who claim to love their neighbors but drink alcoholic beverages and then take the wheel of an automobile in traffic! And this is the fallacy into which many modern liberals easily slip. They confuse verbal assent with faithful performance and the theoretical acceptance of the ideal of love with the obligation to live it.

III

That love is something we must do is illustrated every day in our family

life. Infatuation and nice words are very influential during courtship, and the early months of marriage when the pink rose glow still suffuses everything, but in every marriage the day of wakening comes, unless love continually expresses itself in the kind unselfish deeds, in the service to the real welfare of the beloved, the responsible living for the good of the family which helps the deeper loyalties to grow through the years. When people come to me with marital problems, and say they don't love each other any more, I try to explain that in marriage love is not just a thing we feel. The love we feel is of decidedly secondary importance, and no married couples feel deeply toward each other all the time. But the love we do because we love God and therefore love all His c h i l d r e n, especially those who are our prime responsibility, is more important than the love we feel, and if our neglect of this responsible Christian love has allowed the other to wane, our renewal of this Christian love expressed in mutual deeds of understanding kindness will bring the other back in time!

But not just in marriage! My subject today was copied from a sermon by Frederick B. Speakman in a volume of sermons taking this title, "Love Is Something You Do," a volume I would highly recommend. He tells in this sermon about two maiden sisters in his first parish whose quaint dress and unusual house bespoke their independence, but who were the real saints of the parish. They were always taking a present of jelly to some indisposed friend, or keeping up with an extensive list of shut-ins, sending some p r a c t i c a l remembrance or some bright and useless and enjoyable gift to one of a list of missionary wives they kept up with around the world, or knitting socks for an orphanage in Asia, or taking an active part in some local move for community betterment. And one day when the young minister in his youthful impatience exploded about a particularly difficult individual and said, "How, in heaven's name, as Christians, are we supposed to love a man like that?" one of the sisters replied, "You sound as if you expected yourself to be fond of him. But that's nonsense, isn't it? I don't believe Jesus Christ is interested in nonsense. Fondness, affection for people, can be cultivated, but it cannot be turned on or off like a faucet. Christian love must be something other than that. I'm fairly certain Christ understands that if I'm required to love that man. It must be as a principle and not as an emotion." Yes, as a principle upon which we make ourselves act even against our feelings.

But how can we do this? Only if we have a deep Christian motivation. Only if "under God" we have a great conviction and a deep devotion. But this l o v e cannot be imparted by verbal precepts. If it could, the Jews who repeat the right words daily in their creed, the Shema, would have enough of it. If it could, Jesus' teaching would have been enough and the Cross unnecessary.

We return to Simon Peter and Jesus' way of fitting him for the life of courageous self-sacrifice he must live to feed Christ's sheep in a hostile world. Peter's experience illustrates the Christian resources of love and power that motivate such living. Peter did not have within himself the will power for loyal, sacrificial, responsible discipleship, even after three years of Jesus' teaching. He could talk big, but his performance had been poor. Jesus reminded him of that performance, asking him three times, "Simon, son of John" (the old name characteristic of his weakness) "do you love me more than these?" Peter had to repent of his denials, and the false self-sufficiency that had prompted them. But that same Jesus had died upon the Cross and had risen again, and in these very words was offering Peter pardon and help, restoring their

fellowship and entrusting Peter with his high calling, showing faith in him as he said, "Feed my sheep!"

Then Jesus told Peter and the others to wait in Jerusalem and pray, until the Holy Spirit came upon them. And it was after Pentecost, by faith reborn and inspired and empowered by the living Spirit within, that Peter had the strength of purpose and courage to translate words and will into deeds. But to be willing to be penitent and give himself in faith, and pray, Peter had to respond to the forgiving love of Jesus. For greater love has no man than this, the love of Him who laid down his life for his friends. This is our special Christian motivation to love. We love because God in Christ first loved us, and his love was expressed in history's greatest deed of costly self-sacrifice. Our love, for him, must be something we do.

ARE YOU ALLERGIC TO YOURSELF?

Michael Daves, First Methodist Church, Addison, Texas

Text: "Wretched man that I am." Romans 7:24

A short time ago my doctor told me, "The trouble with most people is not that they are allergic to pollen; they are allergic to themselves." Physicians have come to realize that much of our sickness is psychological in origin, caused by resentment, hate, or guilt. We are allergic to ourselves.

The Apostle Paul expressed his self allergy when he cried out, "Wretched man that I am!" One stage of Christian deevlopment is the realization of your wretched sinfulness. But a more advanced stage is overcoming our sense of wretchedness and woe. My wife takes shots for her hayfever. There are spiritual shots for us to take in curing our self allergy.

Take a shot of understanding. Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." True! Instead of trying to run away from ourselves, we need to sit down and have a good talk with ourselves and with our God. What am I doing here? Where am I going? Why do I act like I do? What are my sins? This will demand more honesty than most of us are prepared for. Yet this is a necessary step.

Take a shot of acceptance. You are wedded to yourself "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer." We need to accept our limitations as human beings in the light of God's love toward us. When we make mistakes, we should not persecute ourselves, but try to learn from them. Another of our great needs is to be able to forgive ourselves when God has forgiven us. This demands accepting ourselves as children of a loving Father. Only as we accept ourselves as we are can we become the people God wants us to be.

Take a shot of responsibility. This is the age of irresponsiblity. Everybody wants to pass the buck. We all want to get the credit, but no one wants to work for it. A college student confessed his dream of dropping out of school at mid-semester, and going to a mountain retreat where he could read and write—become another Ernest Hemingway. A noble ambition, but wasn't his desire an indication of irresponsibility? So it is in every area of life. People shirk their family responsibilities and there is divorce. They neglect their church vows and there is stagnation. They forget their community duties and there is corruption.

Take a shot of love. Has your milk of human kindness curdled? If you do not possess outgoing love, all is lost. Life is such that man must live in community or die in loneliness. We are brought into healthfulness when we identify ourselves with our fellow man in love—weeping when they weep, laughing when they laugh.

"Love your neighbor" is not only a commandment for social health, but also for mental and spiritual health.

And where does this healing come from? Who dispenses the medicine? Not you and me. We are weak and ignorant. Our healing comes from on High. Paul knew. "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 7:25).

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING from page 2

Luke as the gospel for humanity, and John as the gospel of eternity. (Westminster Press, $1.50 each)

With the Holy Spirit and with Fire by Samuel M. Shoemaker is a wise, sober and challenging book with a message essential to the church and the pastor. With razor edge sharpness, the author points to elemental weaknesses in the church's present-day ministry and re-examines the teachings concerning the Spirit and life in "the stream of the Spirit." This book will awaken many to our dependence upon the Spirit as our great hope for the church and her people. (Harper & Brothers, 127 pp., $2.50)

And Jesus Said by Hoover Rupert contains twelve sermons which center in Jesus' informal conversations with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, Zaccheus, Peter, the rich young ruler, Pilate, Mary Magdalene, among others. This book should offer guidance and substance to pastors wishing to prepare their own sermon series based on ways Jesus answers persistent human needs. (Abingdon Press, 143 pp., $2.50)

The Church and the Fine Arts is the fourth anthology edited by Cynthia Pearl Maus. The format is similar to the earlier volumes and contains more than 100 full-page pictures and picture interpretations as well as a generous selection of poems, stories, and hymns with interpretations. This remarkable book presents the complete story of the church according to the genius of artist, musician, poet, and creative writer. In these pages churchmen will find the heritage, tradition, history, and magnitude of the ageless, raceless, and classless "Bride of Christ." (Harper & Brothers, 902 pp., $6.95)

JACKSON WILCOX
CLARENCE J. FORSBERG

THE LIFE-GIVING WORD OF GOD

THE EVERLASTING LIGHT

Jackson Wilcox, First Baptist Church, Chowchilla, California

The spiritual concept of light has a large place in any sound approach to the Christian faith. We see our future hope, we see our salvation, and we see our guide to the experience of salvation all in terms of light.

I

The testimony of the flier who went straight up for 19 miles was that everything was black up there. This may be so. But do not let this fool you about the heavenly place of eternal rest for all of God's children. This is a place of constant light, not produced by the sun or moon, but radiating from God Himself. Revelation tells us, "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof," and "There shall be no night there . . . for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

The Lamb, who is our salvation, is seen as light for ever and ever in the future. He is also light in the past, going as far back as the beginning of creation. In the 47 words of three short verses in John 1:7-9 the capitalized word "Light" occurs four times. It refers to Christ who was Light, who was with God in the beginning, who was shining in the darkness, but not seen by unbelieving men. Of himself, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

The light of faith always has been and always will be. The text in Isaiah 60:19 declares this perpetual quality of divine light: "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light."

If the light of faith is everlasting, it is also necessary for God to provide a means of finding the light. This direction must be such that it will never falter or fail.

Sometimes individuals have come forth and set themselves up as the only valid guides to God. These have not all been wild, untamed, fierce eyed prophets. Some have been plain, sincere, ordinary human beings like the housewife who founded one cult, or the jurist who took over another. Always these have been men who have declared that no one else can know the truth about God and salvation. Too often such ego has become the instrument of Satan.

At the same level are those human institutions and organizations which set themselves up as being absolutely infallible, and the sole caretakers of truth. It makes no difference to me whether such an institution is ecclesiastical, such as a church which says there is no other, or political, as the totalitarian Communist party. The same criticism must be made. Wherever sinful human beings are concerned, there can be no guarantee that a guide to God can be clear or permanent.

The other night I was in the social hall talking with one of our choir members. Suddenly there was a loud "Ping." Without warning one of the big bulbs had gone, and there was a fourth less light in the room. However good we may think the human element may be, this is the fact which must always be faced. A sudden snap and no more light.

God saw fit to maintain the guide to light in another way. Once fixed, this becomes permanent and unchanging. The plainest statement of this is made in Psalm 119:105: "Thy word is the light of which Isaiah spoke when he called to his people and said, "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." God has safe-

guarded the infallible key to the everlasting light in a book—the Holy Bible. This way, men have been unable to change it or destroy it.

II

In the last 2,000 years when civilizations have faltered and social upheaval has come, it has been the Bible which has shone true. One thousand five hundred years ago the Roman Empire suffered decay and began to break up, being overrun with invaders. At the very time of the fourth century disasters, Jerome began to use his great knowledge to translate the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures into Latin, the language of his day and people. His translation became the standard "Vulgate" version. Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette called Jerome's Bible "a light in the murky centuries which followed." Through the Dark Ages it was treasured in churches and in monastaries and illumined darkened souls in the understanding of the Christian faith.

As the Roman Empire collapsed, pagan Germanic tribes invaded Britain. Christianity was exterminated in much of what is now England. But it persisted in Ireland where the Bible was cherished in monastaries. There it was studied, carefully transcribed and illustrated and through missionaries taken back to the Anglo-Saxons, and from there back to Europe.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries brought dark days for Christianity. The official church was corrupt. Worldly scandal and evil crept behind the walls of monastaries. The Mohammedan Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople. This was a gloomy time. But the Christian faith was kept alive and shining by a few men who in quiet, secret places found the Bible, read it, studied it, and sought to share its message with others. It was during these dark days that Martin Luther, through the study of the Book, found his way to truth, and courageously opened up new avenues to Christian experience for believing, reading men.

A look at past history will reveal to anyone that the Bible is the book which has preserved our faith and maintained the light on the pathway to salvation.

III

Since this is so, there is need for us to get the Bible into a position where its light can shine in our hearts, and when its truth can preserve our faith even though the darkness of Communism or of nuclear oblivion should engulf us.

We will not do this just by honoring the Bible as a real great book. Mark Twain once said, "The great books are the books that everyone wishes he had read, but no one wants to read." To find God's everlasting light, we cannot treat the Bible in such a fashion as that. We must read it, absorb it, and let it become a part of us.

On his 85th birthday, Bishop Arthur W. Moulton, the retired Episcopal bishop of Utah, was asked by some reporters to give his secret of a "long and useful life." Without any hesitation the Bishop replied, "Deep, daily draughts of the Bible." This man saw his Bible as more important than vitamins, tonic, diet, or physical exercise. About the Bible, Bishop Moulton said, "The wisdom is there as nowhere else, and the tonic, outlook, spirit—it's all there."

Of course the Bishop was right. He was correct not only for 85 years of living, but for an everlasting eternity of life. The Bible is our guide to all that is right and good both now and evermore.

Thus, I do not hesitate to encourage you to use your Bible as the everlasting light to the presence of God. Get it out. Dust it off. Study it. Memorize it.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

Clarence J. Forsberg, First Methodist Church, Eugene, Oregon

I want to remind you again of the story of Elijah. There are some stories that you tell, and after you have told them, you can walk away and leave them without too much afterthought. However, the story of Elijah is not that kind of story for me. I'd like to reopen the book, not to examine any specific incident, but to think about a problem which is raised by the story.

Let me refresh your memory by reminding you of the three major events in that story. First of all, there was the dramatic encounter of Mt. Carmel, in which Elijah and the false prophets had a showdown as to who could call down fire from heaven. The second major event was the occasion of Elijah's flight from the angry Jezebel. You will remember how he tried to hide in a cave on Mt. Sinai, but how he heard God's voice in the still, small silence, and discovered that his mission was not finished. The third and final chapter of the story dealt with Naboth, the man who refused to part with his vineyard and was slain.

Now there are several ways to look at this Old Testament story. You can consider it as history. It was written as a record of events. You get the feeling that it is not very objective. It is something like the book that was advertised as "an unbiased account of the war between the States, from a Southern point of view." In other words, the prophet is made to look pretty good, and King Ahab comes out looking a good deal worse than he probably was. Other sources indicate that Ahab wasn't nearly such a villain as this story makes him out to be. There is a lot of legend and folklore mixed in with the history, as you would naturally expect from an account as old as this one. Sometimes the account gets Elijah and Elisha mixed up; also, there are some strange supernatural events that do not seem plausible. But it is still history; it is an account that is based on what happened to real people at a specific time in the long story of man's development.

It is not difficult to understand, however, that this is more than history. It is also literature. It is not written like the minutes of the last meeting of the Official Board. Instead, it is written in a fashion that inspires us and makes us want to be very certain that it will be preserved for time to come. It is more like a page from Shakespeare than a page from Newsweek. It has the same basic quality of all great literature in this regard: it is important not just because of the information it contains, but because of the style in which it is written. I would be inclined to say that it is probably better literature than it is history.

But the feeling persists that somehow what we are dealing with here is more than history and more than literature. There is a phrase that occurs over and over again in the story of Elijah, which describes the "something added" as well as anything can. That phrase is "the word of the Lord." Time and again, in the story of Elijah and of the other prophets, the word of the Lord would come, directing His servant to go to a certain place, to find a certain person, or to make a certain pronouncement. "Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, 'Arise and go down to meet King Ahab of Israel who is in Samaria; and you shall say to him, Thus says the Lord . . .' (I Kings 21:17). In other words, Elijah was a spokesman for God. God was making His will known to His People, and to individuals, through the channel of his prophet.

I want to suggest that there is a sense in which the whole story of

Elijah, in his relationship with God and with the people, becomes a vehicle through which the word of the Lord can come to us. Ahab and Jezebel, and the other persons who figure in the story, have long since returned to dust, and the specific messages which Elijah conveyed to them have no real meaning for us. But in a much broader sense, the story can become a channel of God's truth for his people. This is the question that persists when you are all through with a story such as we considered: is it history, or is it historical literature, or is it in some special, profound sense, "the word of the Lord"?

I want to speak to three questions. First of all, what do we mean by the expression, "the word of the Lord"? Secondly, how can anyone be sure that he is really hearing and correctly interpreting the word of the Lord? Finally, what does the word of the Lord require of us?

I

Let me begin by suggesting that the word of the Lord is the revealed will of God as it relates to any human situation.

Now you will see immediately that this has all kinds of implications. It means that God is involved in the destiny of mankind, and in the affairs of all of us, individually and collectively. It means that in the long run He has certain dreams and ideals for human life, and that He seeks to communicate these to man. Not all of you will want to go along with these implications, but they are implied in this particular definition of "the word of the Lord."

Now this is not the kind of thing you can prove. For most of us it is more like an intuition. We "feel" that God has some purpose with life, and that He is seeking to make that purpose clear to us. I was interested in Althea Gibson's autobiography, which has the intriguing title, "I Always Wanted to be Somebody." Well, she is! She is a champion at the sport of tennis, but she is more than a good athlete. She is also a very intelligent Negro girl. There is a paragraph in which some very understandable bitterness shows through. She writes, "As far as the color question is concerned, I have no feeling of exclusion any more. At least, I don't feel that I'm being excluded from anything that matters. Maybe I can't stay overnight in a good hotel in Columbia, South Carolina, or play a tennis match against a white opponent in the sovereign state of Louisiana, which has a law against such a social outrage, but I can get along without sleeping at the Wade Hampton, and I don't care if I never set foot in Louisiana. There is, I have found out, a whole lot of world outside Louisiana, and that goes for South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and all the other places where they haven't got the message yet!"

What message is she talking about? Well, she might be talking about a Supreme Court ruling, or about the inevitable progress that is being made in race relations, or about the general shifting of attitudes and mores that characterizes our time. The chances are that she would be hard put, herself, to define precisely what she means by "the message." I suggest to you that "the message" is another expression for "the word of the Lord."

Most of us, I think, feel intuitively that God has many messages for our world, and that He is seeking to make His will known in our individual lives and in the affairs of our times. Just as God had something to say to Ahab, and to Jezebel, and to the children of Israel, so God has something to say to the people of our generation.

I have another intuition about this whole matter, and that is that the word of the Lord is going to be spoken, somehow, somewhere. Ordinarily you would turn to the ecclesiastical channels to discover what that word is. If you happen to be a Catholic, you would expect to hear it from Pope John, or from the authorities

of your church. If you are a Protestant, you would expect to hear it from the pulpit of your church. However, when those channels are blocked, God is not at the end of His resources.

It is a mistake to believe that everything which is spoken from the Vatican, or for that matter everything that comes from the pulpit of your particular church, is the word of the Lord. There are those today who insist that "the word" is being uttered with greater clarity in the theater than in some of the famous pulpits of our time. I have the feeling that "the word" can be sounded of the Lord can reach us through the pen of someone like Harry Golden, as well as t h r o u g h the through the pen of someone like Harry Golden, as well as through the syndicated column of a successful evangelist. God is never as limited in His resources as we are apt to think. "He does not leave Himself without a witness." I not only believe that there is such a thing as the word of the Lord, but I believe that somehow, somewhere it is going to be uttered.

The word of the Lord is the revealed will of God as it relates to our human situation.

II

Now the second thing I want to say is that we must never be too glib or too casual in speaking about the word of the Lord.

I think we would do well to remember that even Elijah had his doubts, and there were times when he was not sure whether he was hearing the voice of God, or a mighty wind. If there is any place at which a man needs humility, it is precisely at this point. It is all too easy to confuse our own little ideas with the mind and will of God.

Charles R. Brown, who was a professor of homiletics at Yale University, once said that many a minister had confused the effects of a second cup of coffee with the work of the Holy Spirit. He was not being impious. He was simply pointing out that the physical equipment called the body can play tricks on us.

There is a classic story about one of the bishops of the old Methodist Church, South, who loved to smoke, a fondness that he shared with many of his brethen. One of his young ministers saw this as a great vice and weakness, and one day he approached the bishop about it. He explained that in his morning devotions God had spoken to him and commanded him to go to his bishop and tell him to stop smoking. The bishop received him kindly and asked what time he had his morning devotions. When he responded that it had been about 7:00 a.m., the bishop said, "That's strange. I've talked to God since then, and He didn't say anything to me about it!"

Well, this points to some of the subtle dangers that are involved in this whole business of listening to (and speaking) the word of the Lord. It is always possible to be mistaken. Our own subconscious needs and desires can become confused with the will of God. It is hard for us to believe now, but history records that there were devout Christian ministers and laymen who believed in the system of s l a v e r y because they thought that God ordained it. Of course, still today in South Africa and in our own country, there are those who j u s t i f y segregation on Biblical and theological g r o u n d s. Some of them are honestly convinced that they are correctly interpreting "the word of the Lord."

I don't suppose that any demagogue is ever quite as dangerous as when he is also a religious fanatic. And it is a tragic, heart-breaking thing to recall the times when some horrible crime has been committed by someone with a sick mind who believed that "the Lord said it had to be done."

This is why we can never be very glib or very casual about the word

of the Lord. The alternative is not to dismiss it. Instead, as Christians we should seek to discover it and always to measure it against the example and the teaching of Jesus, who was himself "the Word made flesh."

III

Now the third and final thing I would say is that the obligation rests upon all of us to seek to hear "the word of the Lord" for ourselves.

We cannot pay someone to do it for us and thereby discharge our obligation. The story is told about an old Chinese man who watched two missionaries playing tennis on a hot day, and wondered why they simply didn't hire someone to do it for them. Well, the word of the Lord is a personal matter, and every man has to finally discover it for himself. The student should be waiting to hear it in the classroom and the lab; the businessman should expect to hear it in the affairs of commerce; the housewife will discover that the word of the Lord can be spoken in the ordinary routine of family living.

There are too many competing voices today. The still, small voice of silence which God used to communicate with Elijah would have a hard time breaking through the noise barrier that characterizes our day. Christopher Morley phrased it in these lines:

> Quiet is what we need. By telephone,
> The pres, the mail, the doorbell, radio, TV too,
> A.P., or N.A.M., or C.I.O.,
> We're micro-organized and overgrown
> With everybody's business but our own;
> Pipe it down, chain-talkers. Muffle and slow
> The rapid pulse, I wonder if you know
> How good it feels, sometimes to be alone?
> Incessantly loquacious generation,
> Let yeah and nyah be your communication.
> Before the world comes open at the seams
> Invest some private enterprises in dreams.
> In unimpassioned silence we might find
> (If ever) what the Author had in mind!

I submit that there is nothing as important for us as to discover what the Author had in mind. He seeks in so many ways to communicate with us. All of us are under the obligation of listening for "the word of the Lord."

Harry Golden tells us that the nurse who was on duty the night that Einstein died could neither speak nor understand German. What would it not have been worth to know the last words of one of the most brilliant minds of our time. Whatever Einstein had to say that night will never be known to anyone, save God. However, I can conceive of an even greater tragedy. What if the word of the Lord is being spoken in our time, and is lost for you or for me, because we have never learned the idiom and it is foreign to our spirits?

The word of the Lord requires of everyone that we be listening, and seeking to understand God's meaning with our little lives, and with our generation.

God speaks to us through many channels. He has spoken through the prophets, and t h r o u g h the many media which we might dismiss as being secular. He speaks through the experiences of those early Israelites which are recorded for us. But the important thing is that He continues to speak, and you and I can hear the word of the Lord, revealing His will for us today.

HOW TO LISTEN TO A SERMON from page 2

nizes that there were some who heard that same word but did not receive that illumination, and he sums up the reason in this word: "The message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers." If this is the negative side of it, the positive is a promise. Where the word is met with faith, there God's benefits are given. That's why it is important to prepare to listen as well as to prepare to preach.

I

First, there is a faith which we express by the very act of preaching. Apart from that faith preaching would make no sense and be only folly as well as foolishness.

Every day we perform a hundred acts which standing by themselves would seem foolish. But because they are related to something else, they make sense and have their effect. You walk into a room, for example, and turn a little switch on the wall fully expecting that it will flood the room with light. That simple act by itself looks like an impossibility. How can the turning of a button on the wall fill a room with light? It can't—except for one thing. We know that it is related to the great source of power in our city.

We move on to see that this is a picture of the act of preaching, on round and under us there is a seeking, loving God already searching for every opening into our lives. Preaching becomes an act of opening our lives, something which in itself has little significance except as it is related to our daring faith in the disclosing nature of God.

A. J. Gossip expressed it vividly, "Always we are surrounded by a persistency of grace which like the sea around the Dutch dikes keeps feeling and looking for an opening into our lives. And if it finds even the smallest one soaks and trickles and at last pours in."

We go one step farther in this faith that is behind preaching. We remember that in many ways Christ promised that his power and love and peace would be given to those who followed after. How many ways he said it! "Lo, I am with you always." That's one word we cherish. Or, "Greater works than these shall ye because we believe that in and a- the one hand, or prayer, on the other. Preaching has its significance only do." What an amazing promise that is. You see, it is deep in our conviction that the power of God which has come to us in Christ never has been withdrawn. It is still at work among us. And wherever Christ is preached, wherever the memory of him is made fresh, wherever his words are heard and held, wherever new devotion for him is called out, there Christ walks among us still. There the event of his life continues. He is among us, setting free the imprisoned, making whole the broken, enlightening those whose minds are darkened, and laying claim upon those who are wandering.

In preaching we act upon the belief that Christ lives on and does his work among us.

II

Since this is true, we must then consider the preparation we need to make for it.

Obviously the first part of that preparation is the preacher's. There are certain requirements which are constantly upon him. To him, real preaching is impossible, for who is worthy of it? Yet, it is inescapable, for how can we get along without it? So, he must try to do the impossible, trusting that God's grace can use even so faulty an instrument.

How earnestly the preacher must search to know the will and the word of God! And often he will understand the words which Stephen Vincent Benet attributes to Abraham Lincoln in his poem, "John Brown's Body":

What is God's will?

They come to me and talk
about God's will
In righteous deputations and
platoons,
Day after day, laymen and
ministers.
They write me prayers from
Twenty Million Souls
Defining me God's will and
Horace Greeley's.
God's will is General This
and Senator That,
God's will is those poor
colored fellows' will,
It is the will of the Chicago
churches,
It is this man's and his worst
enemy's.
But all of them are sure they
know God's will.
I am the only man who does
not know it.
And, yet, if it is probable
that God
Should, and so very clearly,
state His will
To others, on a point of my
own duty,
It might be thought He
would reveal it me
Directly, more especially as
I
So earnestly desire to know
His will.

There are times like that! Yet, no man who claims the calling of preaching can escape the attempt to know.

Equally, a part of the preacher's preparation is living close to life itself. What a privilege a man has who is a pastor! The door to other lives is open to him at those times in a life or a family when great decisions are made or great hours are experienced. The preacher will draw so often upon these experiences to help him understand the Gospel he must preach. He feels like saying so many times what George Matheson said to his congregation after the years of his ministry, "My sermons may have flown over your heads, but my life has been on a level with your own." Where God's word touches our common life, there preaching must be.

But there is a preparation for the worshiper, too. What do you bring with you to an hour like this?

Certainly **expectancy.** Our listening as well as our praying often is described by that incident in the Book of Acts where the Christians gathered praying for the release of Peter from prison. When Peter actually was set free and walked across the city to knock on the courtyard door, a servant girl ran out to see who was there. When she discovered that it was Peter, she was so surprised that she ran back to those who were praying for his release and said, "It is Peter!" And they in turn argued that it couldn't be because Peter was in prison. Quite a revelation! Praying without expectancy. But how often we listen in the same way.

Moreover, there needs to be an **openness.** Stated more simply, it is an awareness of our continuing need. If one comes to an hour of preaching to check up on the preacher, or to listen for some possible deviation from orthodoxy, or to think what a good sermon that would be for someone else who is present, he will miss it. Be sure of that. We might well begin every hour of preaching with the spiritual, "'Taint my brother or my sister, but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need."

John Calvin once said that God in a moment of conversion made him teachable. That is a quality needed by preacher and listener alike. For God does not break down the door of a closed mind. He waits for it to open. This is one reason we want to protect those first moments of worship on a Sunday morning. It is a time, not to visit with those you will see after the service, but to prepare your own mind and to open the doors in life which so easily blow shut.

Equal to these is our **readiness to act.** One great saint said that when

we come to worship we ought to be like an army standing by to receive orders. We ought to waste not a moment before acting upon any insight, any new understanding, any new assurance that comes to us as we wait upon God. Expectancy, openness, readiness to act—bring those qualities and it will never be said, "The message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers."

WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey

We are made for co-operation like hands, like feet, like eyelids, like the rows of upper and lower teeth. To act against one another is contrary to nature.

Marcus Aurelius

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Halford Luccock tells of a committee meeting where a group were to select a subject for a stain-glassed window to be placed in the church in memory of one of its members. One woman said: "I suppose this is not an acceptable Christian symbol, but I would like to see portrayed in stained glass a pot of glue. This is what our friend was—a pot of strong glue. She held this church together!" What a splendid tribute to a person who stuck to his faith, helped others stick to their faith, and as a result made them stick together.

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The man who stops chasing rainbows soon starts being chased by worries. The man who is done with striving is close to being done to death. But worst of all is to know what you want to do and lack the inner drive to get on with the doing of it. This combination leads fastest to emotional confusion. When the man who used to sit and think gets down to just sitting, mere boredom is his worst menace. When he keeps on thinking, however, but can't get over just sitting, frustration is just around the corner. It's bad enough to keep crossing bridges before you come to them. But it's worse never to come to a new bridge.

Norman G. Shidle

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The belief that youth is the happiest time of life is a fallacy, declares Carl Holmes, the literary wizard of New York. Every age has its silver lining and its golden glow. When we are young in spirit, we cannot help but enjoy life, no matter how old we are. Youth lies not in years but in feeling. I was once told by a friend, "In the central place of your heart there is a wireles station. So long as it receives messages of beauty, cheer, courage, and strength from fellow men and from the Infinite, so long are we young.

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He who floats with the current, who does not guide himself according to higher principles, who has no ideal, no convictions—such a man is a mere article of the world's furniture—a thing moved, instead of a living and moving being—an echo, not a voice. The man who has no inner life is the slave of his surroundings, as the barometer is the obedient servant of the air at rest, and the weathercock the humble servant of the air in motion.

Henri Frederic Amiel

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I know of no method to secure the repeal of bad or obnoxious laws so effective as their stringent execution.

Ulysses S. Grant

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The fear of falling a prey to error must never prevent us from getting to the full truth . . . Love of truth never goes without daring. That is one of the reasons why truth is not loved.

Henri de Lubac

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One way to keep from losing your shirt is to keep the sleeves rolled up.